

Dr. John Herschel Lemon Papers

S821
1857-1930
1folder

Manuscript & Rare Books Division
Indiana State Library

Finding Aid by: Nikki Stoddard Schofield, March 2012

Biographical Note:

In 1844, Dr. John Herschel Lemon was born one mile southwest of Harrodsburg, Monroe County, Indiana, which is thirteen miles south of Bloomington. His father, John A. M. Lemon, was 8 or 9 when Indians attacked at Pigeon Roost in Clark County. His grandfather, William Lemon, was an early sheriff in Clark County. John Herschel Lemon had four brothers, all of whom went to Indiana University. Three brothers were William H., Alexander D., and Homer A. Lemon. In 1856, the children performed in a "little play" called "Injun Count Twenty," in which they counted to 20 in the Wea language.

At the age of 12, he moved with his family to Bloomington, and attended Indiana University in September 1857 at the age of thirteen. He lived in Bloomington until 1867. In that year, as a physician, he moved to New Albany.

When asked by the chair of the History Department at Indiana University, Bloomington, to write about Civil War times, he wrote about 25 pages "seriously trying to be truthful." This document is not in the collection.

In April 1929, John was Emeritus President of the Floyd County, Indiana, Historical Society, in New Albany, and wrote the nine-page letter, which was typed. It gives a history of his early life and his Civil War experience.

Scope and Content Note:

Four documents are in this collection, three handwritten and one typed.

In his two-page 1929 reminiscences of the Civil War, John lists officers of Co. A, 54th Ind. Reg., which was mustered into service on November 16, 1862 at Indianapolis. Jack Allen became General Fielding Mansfield's chief-of-staff, and was "bold and reckless." Before the war, Jack joined Walker's foolish filibuster against Nicaragua.

John's nine-page, typed letter tells about serving on picket duty in Bloomington to apprehend spies. A great barbeque was planned in Green and Sullivan counties, which John called "Sessessia." Union cavalry captured 30 carbines. The barbeque was a failure.

John spent part of 1862 with Company A, 54th Ind. Reg. When Rebels captured government weapons at Newberg, Indiana, and took them across the Ohio River to the Kentucky side, Governor Morton sent 800 men of the 54th to Evansville. John slept with his fellow soldiers on the brick floor of the Evansville Courthouse. The men went by ferry boat disguised as an iron-clad gun boat, which towed a barge full of mules. The barge sank. Along their route in Kentucky, the Union soldiers arrested “political prisoners.” John wrote: “Kentucky had not fully seceded, her slaves not yet freed.”

In the hot summer sun of 1862, a Terre Haute company, which had Germans unused to the heat, gave out. “The body of a German officer of Terre Haute was put in a box with salt packed about and sent back to Terre Haute.”

On page 8, he writes about learning to count to 20 in the Wea Indian language from George Mitchel, youngest brother of Judge Mitchel of Ketchum & Mitchel, a law firm in Indianapolis. He gives the numbers 1-20 with the phonetic spelling after each number.

On March 16, 1930, John Lemon wrote a letter in pencil on school paper to Miss Esther McNitt, Library of Indiana, relating some memories of Harrodsburg and Bloomington, Indiana, from 1857 to 1864. He gives many phonetically-spelled words of the Wea Indians.

In 1830, John’s father organized a Cumberland Presbyterian Church in the new settlement of “Harrodsburgh,” Monroe County.

Item Listing

Folder 1.

Aug. 8, 1921	Letter to Mr. Brown, Indiana State Librarian, handwritten on three pages, 5 ¼ x 8 ½” paper, telling about the play entitled “Injun Count Twenty.”
1929	Addition to Co. A, 54 th Ind. Reg. of 3-months service, reminiscences of the Civil War
April 13, 1929	Nine-page typed pages given in a letter about Butternuts, Copperheads, Knights of the Golden Circle, Democrats and Unionists. On page 8, he gives the numbers 1-20 in the Wea Indian language, spelled phonetically.
March 16, 1930	Nine-page, handwritten letter to Miss Hester McMitt, Library of Indiana, on school lined paper, 8 x 9 ½ inches, tells about his early life and learning Indian lore from George Mitchel.

Collection Information

<i>Size of Collection:</i>	4 items
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<i>Collection Dates:</i>	1857-1930
<i>Provenance:</i>	Unknown
<i>Access :</i>	The collection is open for research use.
<i>Restrictions:</i>	None.
<i>Reproduction Rights:</i>	Permission to reproduce, exhibit, or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Manuscript and Rare Books Division, Indiana State Library.
<i>Language:</i>	Materials are entirely in English.
<i>Alternate Formats:</i>	None
<i>Related Holdings:</i>	None
<i>Notes:</i>	None